

RHODE ISLAND'S COLLEGE- AND CAREER-READY COMMITMENT

Why Is Rhode Island's Commitment To College and Career Readiness So Critical?

A HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA IS NO LONGER ENOUGH FOR SUCCESS

Today, nearly every good job requires some postsecondary education and/or training – such as an associates or bachelors degree, certificate, license, or completion of an apprenticeship or significant on-the-job training.

In 1950, 60% of jobs were classified as unskilled, attainable by young people with high school diplomas or less. Today, less than 20% jobs are considered to be unskilled.ⁱ

One result: The demand for middle- and high-skilled workers is outpacing the state's supply of workers educated and experienced at that level.

- **77% of Rhode Island's jobs are middle- or high-skill** (jobs that require some postsecondary education or training).
- Yet only 43% of Rhode Island's adults have some postsecondary degree (associate's or higher).ⁱⁱ

TOO MANY STUDENTS GRADUATE UNPREPARED FOR REAL WORLD CHALLENGES

Currently, far too many students drop out or graduate from high school without the knowledge and skills required for success, closing doors and limiting their post-high school options.

Rhode Island's graduation rate – both the state-reported and the independently-reported – demonstrates how the education system is not working for all students.

Graduation Rate (class of 2008)	State Reported ⁱⁱⁱ	Independently Reported ^{iv}
	74%	70%

As of 2009, Rhode Island had 8 “dropout factories” or high schools that graduate 60 percent or less of their students.^v

Far too many students enter two- and four-year postsecondary institutions unprepared for college-level coursework.

- Among those Rhode Island high school graduates who enter public college in the state, only 56% persist on their sophomore year at two-year institutions and 81% at four-year institutions.^{vi}

Employers of graduates entering into the workforce directly after high school note gaps in their knowledge and skills:

- 41% of employers are dissatisfied with graduates' abilities.
- Only 18% believe that new graduates, with no further education beyond high school, have the skills necessary for advancement.^{vii}

THE COLLEGE- AND CAREER-READY AGENDA

The best way to prepare students for life after high school is to ensure they graduate with a strong foundation in the core academic areas that will leave all doors open in the future.

Over the past five years, states have driven the college- and career-ready agenda – a policy agenda that seeks to ensure all students graduate high school, and graduate ready for their next steps.

The momentum created by the states has been bolstered by the federal government's Race to the Top competition, which has further incentivized the adoption of common, college- and career-ready standards and assessments.

Support is very strong among voters for college- and career-ready policies, across demographic and party lines:

- 89% of voters agree that “to really get ahead in life a person needs at least some education beyond high school, whether that means university, community college, technical or vocational school.”
- 83% of voters believe all students should “be pushed to take rigorous and broad academic requirements in high school to make sure they have as many options as possible upon graduation.”^{viii}

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What Rhode Island Has Accomplished To Date^{ix}

- In 2006 Rhode Island adopted PK-12 academic standards aligned with college- and career-ready expectations.
- Rhode Island adopted the Common Core State Standards in July 2010
- Rhode Island was a Round 2 winner of the Race to the Top state competition

Rhode Island is one of only 12 states (including DC) to win the Race to the Top state competition

- Rhode Island is a Governing State in the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC), a consortium of states working to develop a common assessment system using Race to the Top Common Assessment funds.
- Rhode Island's longitudinal data system satisfies nine of the ten Data Quality Campaign-identified essential elements, providing a foundation for strong and sound student-level data collection.

Rhode Island is one of 22 states with a P-20 longitudinal data system that regularly matches student-level K-12 and postsecondary data

- While Rhode Island's data system has the capacity to collect and use diverse and robust college- and career-ready indicators in a variety of ways to get a more complete picture of how their students are faring in K-12 and beyond, the state will need to expand its range of indicators to maximize the potential utility of the data system.

How Rhode Island Can Further Advance the College- and Career-Ready Agenda

- ✓ ...Leverage Race to the Top funds to advance the state's college- and career-ready agenda, and build support structures for students to ensure they are fully prepared to meet the raised expectations.
- ✓ ...Realize the promise of the Common Core State Standards by implementing them fully and successfully, taking into consideration the related curricular and policy changes.
- ✓ ...Remain committed to the goals of PARCC and developing a next-generation, computer-based assessment system anchored by college- and career-ready tests in high school that will let students know if they are ready for college-level coursework and measure the full range of the Common Core State Standards.
- ✓ ...Continue to make progress on the state's data collection efforts, particularly around making student data available to relevant stakeholders.
- ✓ ...Re-examine the state's K-12 accountability system to determine how it can further reward measures of college and career readiness.

ⁱ Carnevale, Anthony P. and Donna Desrochers (2003). *Standards for What? The Economic Roots of K-12 Reform*, Education Testing Services.

ⁱⁱ National Skills Coalition www.nationalskillscoalition.org/resources/fact-sheets/state-fact-sheets/; National Center for Higher Education Management Systems, analysis of 2009 American Community Survey. www.higheredinfo.org/

ⁱⁱⁱ Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2009 Rhode Island State Report Card. www.eride.ri.gov/reportcard/09/stateReportCard.aspx?sched=00&schType=3

^{iv} Education Week Diplomas Count 2011, www.edweek.org/ew/toc/2011/06/09/index.html

^v America's Promise Alliance (2011). Building a Grad Nation: March 2011 Update. www.americaspromise.org/Our-Work/Grad-Nation/Building-a-Grad-Nation.aspx

^{vi} Peter D. Hart Research Associates/Public Opinion Strategies, *Rising to the Challenge: Are High School Graduates Prepared for College and Work?* prepared for Achieve, Inc., 2005.

^{vii} Peter D. Hart Research Associates/Public Opinion Strategies, *Rising to the Challenge: Are High School Graduates Prepared for College and Work?* prepared for Achieve, Inc., 2005.

^{viii} Achieve (2010). *Achieving the Possible: What Americans Think About the College- and Career-Ready Agenda*. www.achieve.org/AchievingthePossible

^{ix} Achieve (2011). *Closing the Expectations Gap 2011: 50-State Progress Report on the Alignment of High School Policies with the Demands of College and Careers*. www.achieve.org/ClosingtheExpectationsGap2011